

Lest We Forget War Records Project

In August 1914, Canadians went to war in Europe. The Great War for Civilization would summon nearly 650,000 young Canadian boys and men to service overseas and at home - nearly 10% of the Canadian population at the time. Sixty-eight thousand of these young men would not return home.

Fredericton, a small city of 7,200 people in 1914, saw many enlist in Army, including 155 current or former students of Fredericton High School. Many did not return and are buried in France and Belgium. Why did they join the Army? What did they do when they go to Europe? What were their lives like there and when they came home? We want to know as much as possible about the lives of these 155 boys.

This is not an easy task. It will be at times frustrating, tedious, and (hopefully not too) boring. You will not be doing the traditional work of high school history students - you will be doing the work of historians. It will mean working with primary source documents and piecing together information from many sources and telling a story.

You will be given a name of one of the soldiers whose name appears on our student Memorial Wall Cenotaph outside the main office. Mr. Rutledge and Mr. Peters will also take a name and five classes of students this semester will research, discover and learn what we can about our soldier. Some will find more than others, depending on what is available and the work each student puts into the assignment. The important thing is to learn as much as we can about them.

We plan to have a public presentation of our findings sometime during the first two weeks of May. At this time we are unsure of the details or what form this will take, but will probably involve students presenting their work in the cafeteria for invited dignitaries, teachers and other students.

Our work will begin by searching through accession records of the Library & Archives of Canada (LAC). LAC has the service records of every Canadian soldier from the Great War and we can access them. We need that accession number of the soldiers to order the records from Ottawa. Once we have the service records and regimental diaries we will distribute them to you to work with. While we will start this work in class and plan some more class time in a few weeks, much of this work will be done outside of class time. It will be worth approximately 10% of your grade.

Here is what you need to start:

1. Get a journal. This should not be a binder or an overly large book. In this journal you will write everything you come across. It is the heart of your work as a historian. In your journal you will write questions you have, thoughts and ideas about where you might want to go with this project, any and all details you come across - especially research material and references. It is where you will keep all of your notes on this project. You will also be handing it in at the end of the project for evaluation. Get a journal and bring it with you starting on February 7th.
2. You will eventually write a brief (250 words) biography of your soldier.
3. Try to create a family tree. This may be difficult, but at least some of one can be done. It will require a lot of digging.
4. You will need to create a timeline of activities during his service in the Army, particularly during the Great War. If possible, try to include activities throughout their life if you are able to find such information. More detail is better than less.
5. You will need a presentation board - although not until early May. This will be how you visually represent your research findings. This will develop as the term progresses and you have more information to include. Do not worry about this part as we begin, but by mid-April you will want to be planning for this.
6. Once you have learned some things about your soldier, create a list of questions you would ask them if you could. Also, consider questions you might ask a living relative if you could possibly find one (remember that their children would likely be in their 70s, at least).
7. Traces and other primary sources that will help will be difficult to come by, but serendipitous gifts sometimes happen when conducting historical research. If you are are lucky, you may be able to find a living family member with direct memories of your soldier or photographs, letters, diaries or other mementos that they are willing to loan or copy for you.
8. Remember that you are researching the live (and quite possibly death) of a person who was probably not very different that you, and who was a student at Fredericton High School just as you are. It may seem hard to believe right now, but you will likely develop a strong connection with the person whose live you are reconstructing. Everyone is special in their own way - your job is to understand why your soldier is special and to be able to communicate it to the rest of us. These young men gave their youth, and many gave their lives. Lest we forget.